

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Inquiry into the provisions of the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005

Submitter: Ms Alison Lapidge
Position: President

Organisation: Flinders University Clubs and Societies Association Inc.

Address: Flinders University Clubs and Societies Association Inc.
GPO Box 2100
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Phone: 08 8201 2276

Fax: 08 8201 3077

Email: mail@flindersclubs.asn.au

Our Organisation

The Flinders University Clubs and Societies Association Incorporated is an Association of academic, cultural, political, recreational and religious clubs, societies and associations within Flinders University.

The main objectives of the Association are to:

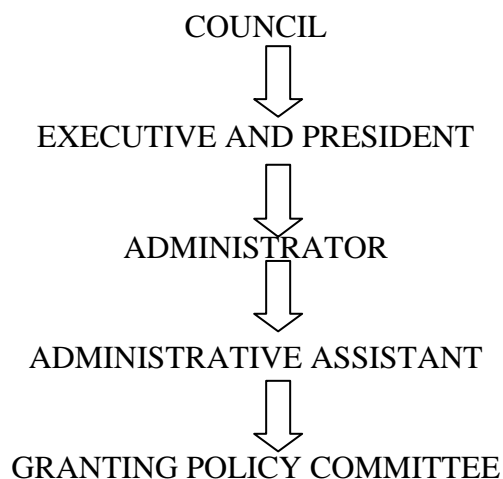
1. foster, coordinate, assist, publicise and encourage the activities of the Affiliated Clubs and provide grants for the Affiliated clubs;
2. provide such additional services as may be necessary to support or enhance the activities of the affiliated clubs;
3. maintain and develop student services as approved by Council;
4. ensure facilities are provided for:
 - a. meetings of the Affiliated clubs; and
 - b. such other services as may be required by the Association members.

Brief History of our Organisation

The Association began on 19 October 1971 with 33 Affiliated clubs. Our Association is proud to be the only independent Clubs and Societies in Australia. In most Australian universities, clubs and societies are a part of a Student Guild, Student Union or a Students' Association. However, at Flinders University, there are six different student organisations who receive funding from the Student Organisation Committee (SOC). The sole purpose of SOC is the allocation of monies from the Student Services Fee to the student organisations, of which Flinders University Clubs and Societies is one. It is this funding which makes it possible for the Association, through its own financial autonomy, to offer the wide range of services to affiliated clubs and students. There are currently over 65 clubs currently affiliated to the Association. Each club has a minimum of 10 members, with several clubs enjoying a membership of hundreds. A recent survey indicated that over 65% of the Flinders University student population had involvement in clubs affiliated to the Association.

Structure of our Organisation

The structure of our organisation is as follows:



The Council

The Council is the governing body of the Association, which consists of:

- a) one delegate from each Affiliated club, as elected at the club's Annual General Meeting;
- b) ex-officio members with full voting rights (members appointed by Council not already members of the Council, provided they are members of the Association); and
- c) Permanent employees of the Association.

The Executive

The Executive Committee, elected by Council, consists of the President, Vice President, Vice President (Activities), Secretary, Treasurer and Chair of Council.

These members are all students and therefore are all Association members. To become a member of the Executive, students must firstly be elected as a club delegate. To nominate for the position of President (the Presiding Officer of the Association) a member must first serve on the Executive Committee for one year.

The Executive Committee is responsible for the day-to-day business of the Association, and attends to such matters as directed by Council. The President is the delegate to the Student Organisation Committee and the Treasurer is the proxy at this committee.

Association Staff

The Association currently employs 2 full time staff. The position of President is employed part time (15 hours per week). Our full time staff are vital in keeping all the clubs running smoothly and in accordance with the incorporated associations legislation which governs our Association. In conjunction with the Executive Committee, they organise our major events, such as Fair Day each semester, and serve

the steady flow of customers of our photocopying, binding and laminating and our popular CD and DVD lending service.

Granting Policy Committee

This committee meets annually to review the granting policies of the Association. Club delegates (Council members) are elected onto this committee at the Council Annual General Meeting.

Thus the Association is run on the important principle of student control of student affairs.

Services provided by our Organisation

- CD/DVD lending service
 - For just \$20 per year (plus a refundable deposit of \$20) students can borrow from our extensive range of over 1500 CDs and DVDs. The service is self-sustaining, as the annual membership fees cover the cost of new items.
- Fair Days on the Plaza
 - All clubs have stalls at our bi-annual Fair Days to advertise their clubs, recruit new members and to fundraise by selling food and other items.
- Club meeting and storage areas
- What's On weekly (term-time) bulletin where clubs advertise their events and meetings, campus shops advertise their products, other student organisations promote their services, activities and meetings, and students and staff are able to sell their goods via classifieds.
- Computers, internet and printing facilities
- Laser black and white and colour printing/photocopying
 - Clubs and Societies provides low cost Clubs are provided with up to \$100 of photocopying per year for clubs associated printing.
- Coil binding service
 - Very popular with post-graduate students when finalising their thesis.
- Laminating, guillotine service and overhead transparency copying.

What students gain from our Organisation

It is no exaggeration that all students gain from our Association on at least one occasion during their university careers. Even if a student chose not to join a club during their time at Flinders, chances are they took part in an event held by an Affiliated club on or off campus, bought a sausage at a club fundraiser, or used our cheap colour photocopying service to make overheads for a class presentation.

Clubs and Societies makes an essential contribution to the development of academic and social networks of students. University can be a lonely place for many students but by joining a club, students are able to find people from their course or from outside of their course who have similar interests. The opportunities to meet new people are particularly appreciated by rural and international students, who comprise a relatively large percentage of the Flinders University population.

Furthermore, Clubs and Societies is the only campus organisation that provides students with the opportunity to develop the skills and experience increasingly demanded by employers, namely teamwork, leadership, meeting, and event management skills, as well as experience handling financial and legal responsibilities.

Each club has its own Executive Committee structure, with a President, Treasurer, Secretary, Council Delegate and others who, along with the rest of the members, are responsible for the day-to-day functioning of their club. Responsibilities include managing a bank account, keeping adequate financial records and meeting minutes, organising at least two club events or activities per semester, applying for club grants, holding regular meetings and liaising with off-campus organisations.

The Impact of VSU on our Organisation

Our organisation currently receives approximately \$250000 per year from the Student Services Fee. Without this source of funds next year, the Association will be unable to employ any staff to assist the clubs with their functioning, such that clubs will struggle to keep in line with their obligations under the state incorporated associations legislation, especially in the area of financial audits.

Secondly, it is unclear whether we will even be able to retain the building which currently houses our club meeting rooms, club storage room, computing and photocopying area and our CD and DVD lending service storage area. Without this space, clubs will be without the facilities necessary to hold regular meetings and to store their club supplies.

Thirdly, clubs will not have club grants as a source of funds to supplement their fundraising activities. This means that clubs will have to focus almost entirely on fundraising activities at the expense of club activities which do not yield a source of income, but are inherent to the purpose of the club. Furthermore, most clubs will have to raise their club membership fees, which will make it more difficult to recruit new members.

Whilst fundraising has always been encouraged and is an important component of all clubs, clubs should not have to be run with profits continually in mind. Having to prioritise the profitability of activities rather than the personal and social benefits to members will be devastating for all clubs.

Finally, in the event that we are able to retain our photocopying, binding, laminating and computing equipment, the costs of such services will have to be significantly increased, making them unaffordable for many students.

Conclusion

The impact of VSU will be devastating for our clubs, our organisation and all Flinders University students. If the legislation goes ahead, it will bring about generations of degree-factory graduates, who lack the skills, experience and confidence which involvement in Clubs and Societies provides. Universities will be boring, lonely places due to students lacking the opportunity to connect with their peers and the wider community.